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ABSTRACT

This report describes the Scandiaplan, a plan for coordinating the acquisition of materials among several special and research libraries in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Elements covered include prerequisites for developing a cooperative acquisition program, the history of the Scandiaplan, technical and economic problems, goals of the program, and the components of library cooperation. (FM)

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Scandia Plan
Collecting cooperation in the Nordic countries

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SCANDIA PLAN

Collecting cooperation in the Nordic countries

For quite some time now, research libraries of the world have realized that they cannot, individually, cope with the task to keep all the literature which possibly can be asked for. This understanding began to grow in Germany already in the beginning of this century - giving rise to the Sondersammelgebieteplan - in the USA during the Second World War - giving rise to the Farmingtonplan - and in Scandinavia in the middle fifties - resulting in the so called Scandiaplan. In all these cases we have to do with a more or less detailed plan to allocate the tasks of acquisition of literature to a number of libraries.

Any plan for coordinating the collecting of several libraries is based on the underlying assumtion that at least some literature can be allocated to different libraries. Apparently this is not true of such publications which are much used and consequently must be available with short notice. The literature suitable for specialization agreements must be so unfrequently used that for some libraries it is cheaper to occasionally borrow this literature than to find it, to acquire it, and to keep it.

Coordinated acquisition schemes are further based on two other prerequisites: 1. If coordinated collecting shall have any meaning the libraries who are cooperating must be fully prepared to put at least the specially acquired literature at the disposal of all the other libraries under the agreement. 2. One has to know where one can find the literature comprised by the scheme.

As to the first prerequisite it depends mainly on technical conditions. You have to operate in an area which is geographically and linguistically fairly homogeneous. Within this area there must exist a reliable postal transportation system, and the libraries working within it must have compatible routines for interlibrary loans. These conditions are very much at hand in most of the Nordic countries, i.e. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden but not in Iceland, mainly depending on the distance.

As to the second prerequisite we can note that we need two kinds of bibliographic information for library and information activities namely one telling us which literature exists about a given subject, and one telling us where this literature is to be found. When it comes to collecting plans it is foremost the second kind of information we need. Stating that, we can also observe that if an acquisition scheme is totally comprehensive there is actually no need for any special bibliographic control. The scheme in itself works as an instrument for locating literature.

A plan for coordinated collecting may be worked out according to two main principles. You can assign the acquisition tasks according to formal criterias or according to subject criterias. In the latter case you can follow two lines. You can make a distribution of many small subjects or you can attribute the responsibility for major subject fields to certain libraries. The second method is feasible within one country but is mostly not suitable for an acquisition plan comprising several countries since none of the participating countries want to give up substantial parts of the information spectrum. That is the reason why the Scandia Plan cooperation between multidisciplinary university libraries was devoted to a distribution of small specialities, whereas the cooperation between groups of special libraries was based on formal criterias, i.e. language and geographical origin of the publications.

The Scandaplan was initiated in 1954 at a Nordic library meeting in Helsinki and was run under the sponsorship of the Scandinavian Association of Research Librarians. A head committee was established for the plan as such which also functioned as a steering committee for the cooperation between general libraries. Besides there were special committees for agricultural, technological, medical, parliamentary, and scientific libraries. The work was carried on without official obligations and with very small fundings. Each participating country allocated a small sum for the administration of the plan, which was performed by a halftime secretary.

Originally the ambitions were very far-reaching. The aim was a maximal, if not total, coverage, of the worlds scientific and technical publications and a transfer of already acquired material from one library to another according to the plan was discussed. Due to this layout

the plan was - as is already observed - comparatively independent of bibliographic control. If you only knew which library had the responsibility for a certain kind of material you also could apply to this library for this material.

In spite of the worldwide attention which was paid to this unique scheme of cooperation between different countries, the Scandiaplan was no immediate success. The transfer of literature from one library to another was never realized, partly depending on the fact that it was considered impossible to take out of the collections books which belong to a certain library according to existing union catalogues. Neither was the acquisition work according to the plan carried out with any intensity, due to the fact that much of it was fringe material in difficult languages and of minor interest for the library who was supposed to collect it. The feeble interest in collecting materials may also be explained by the fact that no extra funds were available for this purpose, neither for staff, nor for purchases.

Here we come across a general problem. According to our introductory statements a plan for collecting cooperation basically arises out of the need to economize with available assets. You can be sure that such an attitude will find the approval of funding authorities. But as long as the coordinated plan mainly deals with very peripheral literature parttaking libraries nevertheless feel a need for extra funding. If the libraries shall feel at least moderately enthusiastic over such a project it must concern literature of some interest so that the coordinated collecting seems to give mutual benefits.

Even if the Scandiaplan did not prove to be very successful it nevertheless left some valuable spin off products. The general libraries have throughout the years stuck to their small specialities and as for the subject-oriented specialized libraries the plan has to some extent served as a sort of shelter against the kind of non-desired material with which many libraries are encumbered. The plan may have been of minor importance for the very purpose for which it was intended, but anyway it played an important rôle in improving the Scandinavian library cooperation. At informal meetings initiated within the framework of the plan librarians from libraries with common interests got the opportunity to discuss matters of general interest and the content of the plan gradually began to move from acqusitions to bibliographic information. Catalogue-

cards of newly acquired literature were exchanged between libraries and printed catalouges of periodicals began to appear.

During the sixties, national councils for research libraries were established in all the Scandinavian countries. This led to a decision by the Scandinavian Association of Research Librarians to offer the Scandiaplan as a project to these councils. In the beginning of the seventies the national councils for research libraries formed a common working committee for cooperation in the library field and this committee sat up a steering committee for the Scandiaplan. This steering group - one and a half years ago somewhat restructured under a new body, the Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries, NORDINFO - has from the beginning devoted the main part of its efforts to clarify the objectives and the working methods of the Scandiaplan. To this end the committee has had to take in to account different factors mentioned above, but also to consider changes, which have taken place in the information community and organisational trends in the library world.

Two technical events of importance for the discussion may be mentioned here. 1. From the middle of the sixties databased documentation was introduced in the Nordic countries, mainly in Sweden and Denmark. This gave the scientists increased information about literature which, in its turn, led to an increased appetite for the original sources. The libraries got obvious difficulties to appease this hunger, due to the fact that the concentration of resources in the information field was not backed up by a corresponding increase in the library field. 2. During the sixties the copying techniques were immensly developed which resulted in the present practise of sending copies of articles instead of loans of periodicals. This led to a smoother loantraffic between the Nordic countries, but still more to an increase in the possibilities to get loans from other countries, in the first place from Britain - the BLLD and its predecessor.

As a matter of fact the BLLD with its unconventional approach to the lending problems was an innovation which attracted the interest also in the Scandinavian countries. We have already declared that cooperative collecting is based on the principle of a more economic use of existing means by a distribution of the responsibility for special groups of literature. Some central lending libraries like the BLLD represent a diametrically different solution to the same problem. In this case parts of the existing common means are allocated

to one central institution. This leads, if sufficient means are provided, on the one hand to a more or less complete coverage of the literature, on the other hand to an increased efficiency of the lending routines.

In Sweden the National Council for Research Libraries made a proposal in the end of the sixties that the government create a Swedish lending library. This proposal was afflicted with two defects.

1. The Council did not venture to propose a funding of the same size as the British one and 2, in this situation, they ignored the double functions of the BLLD, touched upon here. The Swedish proposal envisaged a Swedish lending library with some 15 000 periodicals but it was never made clear whether these periodicals should be the most frequently used ones - which would have relieved the loan pressure of other Swedish libraries - or the least frequently used ones - which would have freed the other libraries from the burden of acquiring and keeping this material. The Swedish proposal was never met with special sympathy by superior and funding authorities, and I think that many Swedish library directors, in spite of the fact that they had agreed to make the proposal, also greeted the refusal with relief more than anyting else. Many of them feared that a substantial allocation of funds to a new Swedish lending library would diminish the grants to other libraries. Of course the regular interlending cooperation between Swedish libraries is another reason why the need for a central Swedish lending library did not seem urgent.

Nevertheless the Swedish proposal was studied with interest also in other Scandinavian countries and the establishment of a Nordic lending library was also discussed. Obviously a Nordic lending library would have had better chances than a national one. The means could have been big enough to create a lending library in so to speak full scale and the market for its services would have been big enough to give a good economy, e.g. a low cost per loan transaction. The Nordic lending library was never brought about, I think in the first place because it was considered too complicated from an organizational point of view to run a permanent institution, funded by money from four countries. There are limits even for the Nordic cooperation.

A Swedish lending library would probably have made Swedish libraries more or less uninterested in the Scandiaplan. A Nordic lending library would have made the plan absolutely obsolete. As things went, the Scandiaplan is still needed and it is still working even if not much more than the name remains of the

old plan. I think one can say that the Scandinavian cooperation between libraries has found new, more realistic ways. I can also say that this cooperation is still the subject of analysis and investigations and much remains to be done before objectives and methods are clear.

Some principal features of the present Scandiaplan may be discerned. One is evident from the paragraphs above about the lending library idea, namely that a totally centralized solution for the provision of literature is rejected, on the national as well as on the Nordic level. Instead certain expectations are attached to a system of central subject libraries. Such libraries have already been established in Norway and Finland, are under planning in Sweden, and are being discussed in Denmark. They are supposed to form the corner-stones in the future cooperation.

Another basic principle is that the cooperation in the field of collecting will not aim at maximal but at optimal coverage of literature in the Nordic countries. That means that no library is supposed to collect extremely unfrequently used literature. One reason for this standpoint is that it is a big enough task to acquire the much and moderately used literature. Another reason is that we cooly count with the possibility to get the least used literature from outside the Nordic countries, mainly from the BLLD or by means of the UAP- programme.

This more realistic view has changed the strategy and partly dissolved the old plan for the distribution of areas of collecting. The distribution of smaller subject fields to general libraries will probably play a rôle also in the future, but the rough distribution among special libraries according to language and geographical area will probably decrease in importance. The coordination of acquisitions within groups of libraries working in the same subject field has become more pragmatic. These libraries examine e.g. which periodicals, abstracted or indexed by a special documentation source, are lacking in the Nordic libraries and accordingly, they try to fill the gaps. Generally, the collecting cooperation will in the future be subject to a continuing planning. Decisions concerning acquisitions attributed to one library or another will be made ad hoc, from case to case.

A cooperation with this flexible outline calls for a detailed bibliographic apparatus, first to give an instrument to locate literature, secondly to give a basis for decisions with respect to a acquisitions The excellent cooperation in the field of inter-library lending between the Nordic libraries has been backed up by a well developed system of union catalogues - for books on a national level, for periodicals increasingly on a Scandinavian level. A printed union catalogue of foreign books and periodicals in Swedish research libraries has existed since the year of 1886. The Danish correspondence dates its origin to 1901 and the Finnish to 1929. In Norway the Oslo University Library keeps a union card catalogue which has been microfilmed. A number of subject-oriented union catalogues of periodicals have been produced and printed during the recent years - LIST-AGR, List-Econ, List-Jur etc - and now at last an EDB-produced general union list of periodicals, NOSP, is under work. It is based on the ISDS-file and its main components are the Norwegian and the Finnish national union catalogues of periodicals, respectively. The advisory group for the Scandia plan has strongly emphasized the importance of NOSP, not least as an instrument for making a good distribution of little used periodicals within the Nordic countries. The advisory group also proposes an increased microfilming of the catalogues of the big libraries and other measures which can be taken to better the knowledge of what literature already is available in Scandinavia. The general attitude is that the supply of literature in Scandinavia probably is not too bad, it is only a question of knowing what there is and where.

The investigations about the Scandia plan and its problems have by no means come to an end. This autumn a study of the shortages in the Nordic supply of literature will be carried on. When completed it will hopefully give a firmer ground for the Scandia plan. The study will concern loan requests which have not been satisfied at all and requests that have been satisfied by loan from another Nordic country or another non-Nordic country. By this investigation we hope to be able to verify such hypotheses as the following: Some subject fields are less well supplied than others, some categories of publications are more difficult to get than others, some libraries are more encumbered by interlibrary lending than others, it takes longer time to get loans or copies from another Nordic library than from e.g. the BLLD etc. The result of the study might confirm the hypothesis related earlier, namely that the supply of literature in Scandinavia generally is not too bad. A more isolated Danish investigation has shown that the majority of the loan requests are satisfied by borrowing from libraries in another Scandinavian country.

Other fields where investigations are under preparation concern the superfluency of some literature and the so called grey literature. There is a growing feeling that some literature - e.g. certain foreign dessertations, certain foreign governmental publications etc - form bulky collections in too many libraries. In many cases it would be sufficient with one copy in one Nordic library of this kind of material. A concentration of this kind would mean a significantly increased effectiveness of Scandinavian library collections. The grey literature can sometimes also be a problem of superfluity, but many times it also offers problems as to locating and availibility.

In a library cooperation like the Scandinavian one the main components are acquisition, bibliographic control, and interlibrary lending. Little has been said here about the last one of these components except that the loan traffic traditionally is working very well between the Nordic countries. But good things can be better and aware of this fact the steering committee of the Scandia plan established, soon after its reorganization in 1972, a special working group for interlending. This group has arranged a seminar on interlending problems and has been working on a handbook for interlending. This handbook will give information intended to improve the Nordic interlending cooperation as well as the interlending contacts with non-Nordic countries. We also hope that the loan traffic will be speeded up by stricter rules for using telex and by transfer of telefacsimiles. About ten years ago an experiment with telefacsimile transfer of articles between the technical libraries in the Scandinavian countries was carried out. However, it was not very successful due to the slow transfer procedure at that time. Now the technical development has been such that the time probably is ripe for new trials of the same kind.

This paper has hopefully shown that the Scandia plan has developed from a scheme for coordinated collecting to a general framework for a comprehensive cooperation between the Nordic research libraries when it concerns acquisition, bibliographic control, and interlending. As such it forms one of three programme fields of the Nordic Council for Scientific Information and Research Libraries, NORDINFO. The other programme fields of NORDINFO are for data-bases and network communications and for education.

The Scandinavian library cooperation is based on a philosophy of decentralization, on the national level to some extent concentrated to libraries with special responsibilities for certain subject fields. Like any decentralized system it has its shortcomings. The organization and the planning is a bit unwieldy, it requires an extensive bibliographic control, and the loan procedure can, at least in bad cases, be slower than in a centralized system.

All the same I think that we in the Nordic countries are prepared to pay the price for a model, which is the result not so much of a choice but of a natural growth out of the unique conditions for cooperation existing between the Nordic countries. A prominent Swedish librarian used to talk about the Swedish "Gesamtbibliothek" by which he meant that all the Swedish libraries - and foremost the libraries funded by official means - form parts of one and the same library resource. I think that not too many of my Nordic collegues would disagree if I say that my paper here has essentially treated the Nordic "Gesamtbibliothek".